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AUTHOR Ryan, Charles W.
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ABSTRACT

Teachers commonly use only two types of assessment--written examinations that test basic skills and direct observation of student learning. Both assessment procedures have been the subject of intense criticism. This study was conducted to investigate the viability of the portfolio model for authentic assessment of student growth, to analyze self-concept related teaching activities, and to develop the reflective abilities of students in grades K-6. Data were gathered from three selected public schools and teachers who implemented portfolios as part of a drug education effort. All subject areas were included in the portfolios along with accompanying documentation in the areas of self-concept growth and drug education curriculum activities. Analysis of 40 portfolios revealed that the majority of students' materials included self-concept activities and some drug education information, and that student worksheets showed completion of both drug education and self-concept learning activities. However, findings provided little evidence of student-based reflection on what the portfolio entries meant to them. Student portfolio evaluations are summarized in tabular form. (LL)

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AUTHENTIC ASSESSMENT OF SELF-CONCEPT THROUGH PORTFOLIOS: BUILDING A MODEL WITH PUBLIC SCHOOLS

by

Charles W. Ryan, Ph.D.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Authentic Assessment of Self-Concept Through Portfolios

INTRODUCTION

In this presentation, we present the results of a project oriented to develop reflective abilities of students in grades K-12 as it relates to a portfolio model. A total of nine school systems were involved with the Department of Teacher Education and the Department of Educational Leadership as part of a federally funded project to integrate drug education activities in selected public schools. We began this process in the spring of 1992 and will continue research and development efforts through the spring of 1994. A major focus of this project was to develop a portfolio process in grades K-6 in nine selected elementary schools within the service area of the College of Education and Human Services, Wright State University, Dayton, Ohio.

As we have worked with teachers and teacher education students over the past six years in the development of portfolios, we deemed it appropriate to start a process for implementing portfolios in grades K-12. Our initial research findings are focused on grades K-6 and those selected classrooms and teachers who implemented portfolios as part of a drug education effort in the public school sector. The teachers participating in the project were trained in the technical structure and philosophy of portfolios for use in each classroom. All subject areas were to be included in the portfolio with accompanying documentation in the areas of self-concept growth and drug education curriculum activities. This presentation will focus on an analysis of self-concept related teaching activities and authentic assessment of student growth as documented in the portfolio.

OBJECTIVES

As part of the larger project, the objective of the self-concept intervention was to develop and field test the portfolio as a means of developing self-concept growth among students in grades K-6. Evidences would include documented activities that students participated in self-concept activities and reflective comments by the students in their portfolios. In addition, a broader objective was to recognize the portfolio's potential for self-evaluation and authentic assessment

by teachers and staff in a particular public school. The project objectives were to gather and analyze data which would contribute to portfolio model development as one method of teacher assessment of student growth. Specifically, we researched the following items:

1. Documented self-concept activities in portfolios of selected students in grades K-6.

2. Documented student reflection comments in portfolios.

3. Development of a structured program for self-concept teaching in grades K-6.

CONCLUSIONS

The preliminary research findings are related to a widely recognized need for new teacher assessment approaches. At the present time, only two types of assessment are commonly used: written examinations that test basic skills and direct observation of student learning. Both assessment procedures have been the subject of intense criticism. The standardized test, in particular, has been demonstrated to show an inadequate match between what is measured and any reasonably adequate conception of how learning should be represented (Darling-Hammond, 1988). Direct observation carries with it a number of drawbacks, including subjectivity/prejudice of the observer or checklist-type scales which ignore differences in subject matter or age level of students (Schulman, 1986).

A major component of our research was to investigate the viability of portfolios for authentic assessment of student growth in the self-concept area. To accomplish this, we randomly selected a total of 40 portfolios from three selected schools for analysis of subject area content, drug education content, and self-concept content. We were particularly interested in determining if students reflected upon their growth in subject matter areas and self-concept building activities. The symposium presentation will discuss the findings as it relates to authentic assessment on what students actually do in maintaining and documenting learning and self-concept growth in a portfolio. We will discuss the portfolio content in relation to self-concept development, student-teacher interactions, and reflectivity as it relates to student self-growth.

ASSESSMENT OF SELF-CONCEPT THROUGH PORTFOLIOS

INTRODUCTION

The Department of Educational Leadership at Wright State University, located within the College of Education and Human Services, received a United States Department of Education grant to work with nine Ohio school districts over a two year period. The purpose of this training and development effort was to study and implement innovative drug awareness teaching modules during the academic years 1991-92 and 1992-93. The project focused on the infusion of portfolio assessment and drug education case study problems in traditional K-12 classes. Specifically, a major effort of the project was to link drug education curriculum content with teaching practices in selected grades three through twelve. An additional part of the training and research effort was to assess student reflectivity as demonstrated through portfolio activities in the self-concept area.

Several of our major goals were to provide intensive inservice training to targeted teachers, counselors, and administrators from each of the ten participating network schools. In addition, the project focused on curriculum restructuring methodologies, infusion techniques, student case writing, portfolio development, reflectivity assessment, and school-community partnership building. We targeted grades 3-9 in the 1992-93 academic year and worked with over 80

teachers through a series of workshops and formal seminar presentations. A series of workshops and consultations were conducted with project schools to discuss philosophy and methods and procedures for developing portfolios with a drug infusion emphasis. The majority of these sessions were held at off-campus sites (at the participating schools) to minimize travel for participants while involving school administrators in this delicate process of change. A total of ten schools and three universities were involved in the training of teachers who volunteered to participate in this project.

METHODOLOGY

As stated earlier, a major component of our research effort was to investigate the viability of portfolios for authentic assessment of student growth in the self-concept area. The evaluation design was summative and included the use of content analyses and expert judgment to assess the amount of student reflectivity in selected portfolios. To accomplish this, we randomly selected a total of 40 portfolios from three selected schools for analysis of subject area content, drug education content, and self-concept content. The classrooms involved included two grade 4, one grade 3, and one grade 7. The student portfolios were randomly selected by the three faculty investigators who visited each school and were provided portfolios for all classes. For example, one faculty member visited Five Points Elementary School (Fairborn City Schools)

and selected 50 portfolios from grades 3, 4, and 7 for content analysis. The 50 portfolios were selected from nine classes to determine student activity in self-esteem, academics, and drug education. Our findings are reported in Table 1, Table 2, and Table 3. Each of the three faculty members used a structured review sheet to review the portfolios and identify drug education content, self-concept content, and evidences of reflectivity by the student.

RESULTS

After analysis of the data secured by the three investigators, we found little evidence of student reflectivity in the portfolios. It appears that the participating teachers did not link portfolio entries to drug education activities/self-concept and student reflectivity. The majority of student portfolios did contain self-concept activities and evidences of some drug education information. We found ample evidence on student worksheets that indicated they had completed both drug education and self-concept learning activities. In addition, students in the selected grade areas have completed a number of structured work assignments in the area of drug education, self-concept, and community building activities. We also note some reflection as it relates to student attitudes and opinions about school and their interactions with teachers and parents. Overall, a wide range of self-concept topics were covered by the participating teachers, but there is much to do to encourage student reflectivity on what the learning activities meant to them.

On the negative side, we did not find adequate linkage to drug education through worksheet activities. Also, the portfolios did not provide strong evidence of individual ownership and appeared to be more a collection of assigned worksheet activities over the ten week period. We did not find enough evidence to indicate a high rate of growth in self-concept understanding and reflection on what academics mean to the students. The portfolios did not provide serious evidence of ownership or student self-assessment. In terms of technical structure, the physical components in relationship to organization and item inclusion could be improved. A number of portfolios were not neatly organized and did not contain a table of contents. Overall, the most serious weakness was the lack of student-based reflection on what the portfolio entries meant to them (see Table 4).

CONCLUSIONS

In this evaluative study of a drug education project that involved ten school systems, we have attempted to determine the impact of reflectivity use among students as controlled and directed by experienced classroom teachers. It was our intent to develop local school ownership of the portfolio model that would be used within their building and subsequently have the students develop expertise in reflectivity. Our initial findings indicate that students are not reflecting upon a number of worksheet activities that document growth in self-esteem. In addition,

they were not linking drug education curriculum activities to personal reflections as it relates to self-esteem growth. We did note a clear link at all three sites between teacher-based instruction and portfolio content. And, the information appeared to be somewhat superficial due to the lack of reflection by students. All three investigators concur that expanded discussions between university professors who have training in self-concept theory and the use of reflectivity must work with classroom teachers before we will notice an increase in student self-analysis behavior. To accomplish this, projects of this nature must include intensive inservice training for teachers as it relates to self-concept theory, reflectivity analysis, and authentic assessment through portfolios. We noted a heavy reliance on student-based worksheet activities that may be an effort to structure learning and have students perform a number of activities. The content for self-concept and drug education material was noted in the portfolios but the major weakness was lack of reflectivity as it relates to student self-analysis and growth.

SUMMARY

The findings and recommendations of this preliminary summative evaluation appear to be supported by the data collected to perform an overall evaluation. We know that teachers were extremely enthused about developing portfolios in all grades involved and provided us ample evidence of their delivery

of self-concept and drug education content. While we had no difficulty in understanding their content based approach to instruction and student growth, we do have difficulty in understanding the lack of reflection by students. In the use of authentic assessment strategies it is important that students learn how to reflect upon what they have done, why they have done it, and what impact it has had upon their growth as both a person and a learner.

Perhaps other serious problems that we noted in our work with these schools over two years are related to the lack of time for intensive inservice training of the participating teachers within each particular school. All workshops had to be scheduled at either 7:30 am or 3:30 pm. It is extremely difficult to find quality inservice training time for teachers in the public school sector. Faculty in the public school sector are not provided adequate time for planning and development of instructional innovations such as the drug education and portfolio concept. We found teachers being pressured by a variety of state-driven initiatives (e.g., performance-based education, comprehensive testing) that have diluted other efforts to innovate within the school curriculum.

A second finding relates to drug education efforts that are currently in progress in the schools we were working with. Of the ten schools, only one has an extremely well-developed drug education program from kindergarten through grade 12 and actively uses programs such as QUEST, Drug Awareness Resistance Education (D.A.R.E.), and a variety of community support network systems

from the Red Cross to the United Way. The other schools had fragmented and very scattered programs that dealt with drug education from kindergarten through grade 12.

A third finding relates to a general impression among the educators involved that drug education and self-esteem development are most likely the responsibility of the school counselor, school psychologist, or the health and physical education staff member. This fragmentation of efforts made it difficult to infuse drug education into the portfolio process and to educate teachers in linking both together.

Also, of the nine schools only one had adequate resources to support teachers with drug education curriculum models, films, videos, and/or other materials to consistently help children learn about the problems of drug abuse in our culture. In relation to self-concept, we were able to provide the schools the on-task self-concept (OTSC) curriculum guide that provided structured learning activities for the total academic year.

A final impression relates to the difficulty of change and innovation in the school when the teaching staff is overwhelmed with large classes, attendance problems, and inadequate support systems. Time is the critical variable, and there is not enough of it to permit full implementation of project activities such as the drug-free effort, let alone the Year 2000 goals articulated by President Clinton. Teachers seemed overwhelmed by a number of mandates that have been

forced upon them by local political groups, state education agencies, legislative bodies, and/or accrediting groups.

In sum, it is important that individuals seeking to work with public school faculty and administrators be aware of an increasing number of issues and concerns that restrict innovation and significant change. While we were seeking to develop a firm partnership with the ten participating schools it was necessary to consistently remind ourselves of problems related to inadequate funding, insufficient time for inservice training, and a host of social/psychological problems that impede the teachers' work in the classroom. Quite frankly, teachers, counselors, and school administrators are overwhelmed with the problems that youth of today bring to the school setting and hinder their learning of academic materials. It is our opinion that there is need for consistent work in the area of self-esteem as it relates to the child's development and the coupling of this with their academic learning.

Table 1 Drug-Free Project Portfolio Evaluation

NORTHWESTERN SCHOOLS
May 18, 1993
Investigator: Dr. Charles W. Ryan

SUBJECT

Analyses of 15 randomly selected portfolios from grade 4. After randomly selecting five classes (out of six) and three portfolios per class a content analysis was performed to determine student activity in self-esteem, academics, and drug education.

POSITIVE FINDINGS

1. Students completed approximately 5-7 self-concept building activities per class.
2. Students completed 3-5 drug education activities per class.
3. Students linked subject matter to self-concept activities.
4. Students are including worksheet activities on portfolios that were divided into eight topic areas (three or four classes), one class.

NEGATIVE FINDINGS

1. Students were not reflecting upon worksheet activities for documentation of growth in self-esteem.
2. Students were not linking drug education worksheet activities, e.g. growth from October 1992 to May 1993.
3. Student portfolios did not provide strong evidence of ownership, e.g. reflection upon content. It seemed to be more of a loose collection of worksheet-based learning activities. Pictures, letters, comments were not included.

PROJECT TEACHERS

POSITIVE FINDINGS

1. Teachers use a variety of student-based worksheet activities.
2. Teachers will develop a portfolio (need help with reflection).
3. Portfolios are exercise heavy.

NEGATIVE FINDINGS

1. Very little evidence of student-guided reflection.
2. Very little evidence of links between instruction and portfolio reflection.

Table 2 Drug-Free Project Portfolio Evaluation

FIVE POINTS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
May 21, 1993
Investigator: Dr. Donna J. Cole

SUBJECT

Analyses of 16 selected portfolios from grades 3 and 4. The 16 portfolios were analyzed from nine classes to determine student activity in self-esteem, academics, and drug education.

POSITIVE FINDINGS

1. All 16 portfolios had worksheets on self-concept awareness.
2. All 16 portfolios had worksheet evidence of drug education.
3. All 16 portfolios indicated teacher involvement in drug education to the degree that "Just Say No" worksheets were within them.
4. In three of the portfolios, clear evidence of academic work appeared.

NEGATIVE FINDINGS

1. None of the portfolios had clearly divided sections or a recognizable organizational pattern.
2. None of the portfolios showed growth in self-concept or academics.
3. The information remained somewhat superficial due to the lack of reflection by students.
4. There was no evidence that students assessed the worksheets.
5. There was no evidence of ownership by the students or an original nature to the portfolios.

PROJECT TEACHERS

POSITIVE FINDINGS

1. Two teachers did produce portfolios with a slight degree of reflectivity evident.

NEGATIVE FINDINGS

1. Teachers appeared to lack knowledge about getting students to reflect.

GENERAL COMMENTS, SUGGESTIONS, AND CONCERNS

1. The overriding theme of the portfolios was self-concept awareness.
2. Action plans need to be developed with goals, objectives, results, and assessment.
3. A large number of worksheets are still being used in public school education.
4. More discussion between university professors skilled in developing reflectivity in classroom teachers must occur.
5. Reflectivity should be a good topic area for portfolio summer course.

Table 3 Drug-Free Project Portfolio Evaluation

WEST CARROLLTON SCHOOLS
May 14, 1993
Investigator: Dr. Roger Coy

SUBJECT

Analysis of 20 randomly selected portfolios from West Carrollton Junior High and Schnell Elementary Schools. The 20 portfolios were analyzed from six randomly selected classrooms (Schnell: 4 classes x 10 students, Junior High: 2 teams x 10 students) to determine student activity in self-concept, academics, and drug education.

POSITIVE FINDINGS

1. Schnell: All ten portfolios contained evidence of self-concept and drug education activities.
2. Schnell: All ten portfolios had sections and were organized by topics (self-portrait, academic, and assessment).
3. Schnell: Students selected school papers for evidence of academic growth.
4. Schnell: A clear link existed between instruction and portfolio content.
5. Schnell: Student attitudes and opinions were reflected in portfolios (reflection on parent's divorce, reflection on how to cope when offered drugs).
6. Junior High: Eight of ten portfolios contained at least some evidence of drug education. (One had unit "We are learning about drugs".)
7. Junior High: Portfolios were organized and had divisions.
8. Junior High: All ten portfolios showed evidence of academic and self-concept growth (heavy emphasis on goals/plans).
9. Junior High: Some impressive topics covered by teachers.
10. Junior High: Some portfolios showed a lot of time and effort.

NEGATIVE FINDINGS

1. Schnell: Assessment content was not complete (may be waiting for the end of the year).
2. Schnell: Physical components could be improved (plastic sleeves for easier access, binders).
3. Junior High: Some portfolios were lacking in drug education content.
4. Junior High: Two of the portfolios were not very neat.
5. Junior High: A three-ring binder would provide for better access.
6. Junior High: Not much evidence of reflection present.

Table 4 Summary of Student Portfolio Evaluations

School	Investigator	Number	Positive	Negative
Northwestern Elementary (grade 4)	Ryan	14	Self-concept building activities Drug education activities Linkage of subject matter to self-concept activities Portfolios divided into topic areas	No reflection on worksheet activity No linkage of drug education worksheet activities Portfolios did not provide strong evidence of ownership
Five Points Elementary (grades 3 and 4)	Cole	16	Self-concept awareness worksheets Worksheet evidence of drug education Portfolios indicated some teacher involvement Some portfolios contained evidence of academic work	No clearly divided sections No demonstration of growth in self-concept/academics Lack of reflection No evidence of student assessment No evidence of ownership
West Carrollton Junior High and Schnell Elementary	Coy	20	Evidence of self-concept and drug education activities and portfolios divided into topic areas Evidence of academic growth Linkage between instruction and portfolio content Some reflection on student attitudes and opinions Some impressive topics covered by teachers Some portfolios showed a lot of time and effort	Assessment content not complete Physical components could be improved Some portfolios lacked drug education content Not much evidence of reflection Some portfolios not very neat